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SUBJECT: AFGHAN ROAD CONSTRUCTION, ITALY SAYS AFGHAN
OFFICIALS SOURCE OF DELAYS

REF: SECSTATE 184232

1. (SBU) Econoff delivered reftel demarche to Giuseppe Cinti, Office Director for Afghanistan at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Alessandro Modiano, Office Director for Asia and Latin America, at the MFA's Directorate for Development Cooperation (Italy's USAID equivalent). On October 12, Maia Pia Dradi, a expert on Afghanistan reconstruction in Modiano's office, responded with an update on the Kabul-Bamiyan road project.

2. (SBU) Dradi said the delays in the start of construction were the result of a lack of capacity at the Afghan Ministry of Public Works. Contracts are being tendered and awarded at a very slow pace. Though the GOI committed to assist in building the road in January 2003, the Ministry of Public Works, even with Italian experts assisting, only succeeded in awarding the contract for the design work in October 2004. She said the Ministry will hopefully award the contract for construction in March or April 2006, so that work can begin in early summer. Assuming an 18-24 month construction schedule, the road will not be completed until early-to-mid 2008.

3. (SBU) Dradi said the GOI has already allocated euro 36 million (\$43 million) for the project and has disbursed euro 12 million to the GOA for the design phase. The other euro 24 million for the construction will likely be disbursed to the GOA this year.
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